tional goods, facilitating consignment exports under the debt repayment route and having long term trading arrangements in agreed commodities.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Ban on Export of Molecules

622. SHRI KHAN GHUFRAN ZAHIDI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that due to ban on export of Molecules under Test, the domestic Pharmaceutical Companies who have received export order over Rs. 300 crores for supplying Sildenafil Citrate, are facing lot of difficulties in fulfilling their commitments with the importers;

(b) if so, whether Government are considering lifting of ban on export of these Molecules;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERECE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HAGDE): (a) There is no ban under the Export and Import Policy on the export of Molecules under Test and therefore export of Sildenafil Citrate is also not banned. However, the export orders of Sildenafil Citrate are held up because of suspension of issue of 'No Objection Certificate' by the Drug Controller General of India in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare pending receipt of clarification of prevalent regulations to manufacture this drug for export purposes.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Decline in Price of Rubber

623. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the price of natural rubber has declined and the farmers are facing serious crisis;

(b) if so, the details of decline in price and the steps taken to maintain remunerative price;

(c) whether Government have received any representations in this connection and if so, the details of the request;

(d) whether Government have directed the STC to procure rubber; and

(e) if so, the details of procurement made during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (e) Yes, Sir. The price of natural rubber (RSS-4) which was around Rs. 30 per kg. in July, 1994, touched more than Rs. 60 per kg. in June, 1995. However, the price of NR started declining steadily since then and after November, 1996 the decline has been sharp. The price of Natural Rubber on 23.2.99 was Rs. 2850 per quintal.

The Govt. of India, on receiving representations from several Members of Parliament as also from Govt. of Kerala, requesting for Government intervention to check the declining prices of rubber in the domestic market, had, in August, 1997 and May 1998, directed State Trading Corporation to procure upto 10,000 MT and 20,000 MT of Natural Rubber respectively on Govt. account.

As on 12.2.99, STC has procured 8737 MT of Natural Rubber against the ongoing procurement operations. This is in addition to 9596 MT of NR procured during 1997-98

Import of Tea from Sri Lanka

624. SHRI PRAFUL GORADIA:
SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to permit import of tea at concessional duty rates from Sri Lanka;

(b) whether Government are aware of

its adverse impact on our tea industry which is a major source of foreign exchange; and

(c) if so, whether Government will withdraw the concessions to protect the indigenous tea industry?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) Under the provisions of the Free Trade Agreement signed with Sri Lanka, the lists of items of which tariff concessions are to be provided by each side, are to be exchanged within 60 days of signing of the Agreement. The lists are being finalised at present. The concerns of various sections of the industry, including the tea industry, are being kept in mind while finalising the lists.

WTO Talks

625. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD:
SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has asked for benefits before fresh WTO talks;

(b) if so, the details of India's viewpoint; and

(c) the steps taken to form a common front of developing nations to flight their causes in the WTO?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) The range of WTO Agreements which constitute a rule based system for the governance of International trade, represent a balance of rights, concessions, commitments and obligations on the part of all member countries. India is a founder member of both the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1947 and its successor organization, the World Trade Organization or WTO, which came into effect on 1.1.95 after the conclusion of the Uruguay Round (UR) of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. India's participation in an increasingly rule based system in the governance of international trade is to ensure more stability and predictability, which ultimately would lead to more trade and more prosperity for itself and the other member nations of the WTO. India also automatically avails of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) and national treatment for its exports from all WTO Members.

In the Geneva Ministerial Conference of the WTO held in May, 1998 India had highlighted diffculties faced by developing countires in implementing WTO Agreements and emphasized the need to ensure that International trade subserves the needs of development and that it works towards raising the standards of living of all countries, especially developing and least developed countries. The Geneva Ministerial Declaration upheld the Indian approach and placed implementation issues at the top of the agenda in the work programme for the Third Ministerial Conference, scheduled to be held between 30 November and 3rd December, 1999 in the United States of America. The Geneva Ministerial Conference decided that a process would be Initiated in the General Council for considering implementation issues, issues mandated in the Uruguay Round Agreements, issues arising out of the Marrakesh and Singapore Ministerial Conferences and other issues relating to multilateral trade which are agreed upon by all member countries.

India has taken a pro-active and active role *vis-a-vis* the multilateral trading system by way of numerous papers circulated and intervention made at WTO and related international trade fora. In the context of the ongoing preparatory process in the General Council for the Third Ministerial Conference, India has submitted papers relating to (1) Differential and More Favourable Treatment of Developing and Least Developed Countires in various WTO Agreements; (2) Unilateral Trade Measures; (3) Customs Valuation; and (4) Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues. Besides, a number of other papers